

**Before the  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of	)	
	)	RM - 10781
Various Petitions for Rulemaking Seeking	)	RM - 10782
Amendments to the Commission's Part 97	)	RM - 10783
Amateur Radio Service Rules Relating to	)	RM - 10784
Morse Code Proficiency Testing Requirements	)	RM - 10785
	)	RM - 10786
	)	RM - 10787
To: The Commission	)	

**VIA the ECFS**

**REPLY COMMENTS OF CARL R. STEVENSON – WK3C**

I respectfully submit my personal Reply Comments in response to Comments on the Petitions for Rulemaking (“the Petitions”) in the above-captioned Proceedings, seeking changes to the Commission’s Part 97 rules for the Amateur Radio Service.

I have been licensed by the Commission as an amateur radio operator for over 25 years, and I am the Executive Director of No Code International (the Petitioner in RM-10786), a Fellow of the Radio Club of America, a Senior Member of the IEEE, a member of the American Radio Relay League, a member of the Quarter Century Wireless Association, a member of two local amateur radio clubs, and a member of ARES and RACES<sup>1</sup>.

I have also been an RF systems engineer for over 32 years.

I currently hold an Amateur Extra Class license, so I have nothing to gain personally in terms of operating privileges should the Morse proficiency requirement be deleted from the Commission’s rules. My interest in this matter is based solely on my firm belief that the elimination of Morse proficiency requirements from the Commission’s rules for all classes of amateur radio licenses issued by the Commission is in the best interest of the Amateur Radio Service and its ability to fulfill its Basis and Purpose, as defined by the Commission.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Amateur Radio Emergency Service and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 97.1

## INTRODUCTION

1. In general, all of the Petitions seek to eliminate, in varying degrees and with varying provisions, the current requirements in the Commission's Part 97 rules for the Amateur Radio Service (the "ARS") that applicants for amateur licenses that grant privileges in the bands below 30 MHz pass "Element 1" – a Morse code proficiency test at 5 words per minute.
2. Because of the elimination of a mandatory requirement in the ITU Radio Regulations ("the Radio Regulations") at the World Radiocommunications Conference, 2003 ("WRC-03"), the Commission is no longer under an obligation to continue this requirement in its Part 97 rules.
3. In fact, as pointed out in NCI's Petition for Rulemaking (RM-10786), this previously existing requirement in the Radio Regulations was the only reason cited by the Commission in its Report and Order in WT Docket No. 98-143 (the "R&O") for keeping any Morse proficiency requirement in its Part 97 rules for the ARS.
4. Furthermore, in the R&O, the Commission reached the following determinations regarding the necessity and desirability of maintaining a Morse proficiency requirement in its Part 97 ARS rules:

- *"... because the amateur service is fundamentally a technical service, the emphasis on Morse code proficiency as a licensing requirement does not comport with the basis and purpose of the service [emphasis added] ..."*<sup>3, 4</sup>
- *"...we note that one of the fundamental purposes underlying our Part 97 rules is to accommodate the amateur radio operator's proven ability to contribute to the advancement of the radio art. We believe that an individual's ability to demonstrate increased Morse code proficiency is not necessarily indicative of that individual's ability to contribute to the advancement of the radio art. As a result, we find that such a license qualification rule is not in furtherance of the purpose of the amateur service and we do not believe that it continues to serve a regulatory purpose [emphasis added]."*<sup>5</sup>
- *"We have considered the comments on this issue and conclude that the public interest will best be served by reducing the telegraphy examination requirement to the minimum requirement that we have found that meets the [ITU] Radio Regulations [emphasis added] ..."*<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See the R&O, at 30.

<sup>4</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 97.1

<sup>5</sup> See the R&O, at 25.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

**THE ONLY REASON THAT THE COMMISSION CITED FOR KEEPING ANY MORSE TESTING AT THE TIME OF THE R&O NO LONGER EXISTS**

5. WRC-03 modified the Article 25 of the Radio Regulations, effective July 05, 2003, *with the full support of the U.S. and without opposition by a single ITU member administration*, eliminating the previous, unwaivable obligation on administrations to require a demonstration (test) of Morse proficiency and leaving it to the discretion of administrations to determine in their national rules whether a Morse test would be required or not. Therefore, the “*minimum requirement that meets the ITU Radio Regulations*” for any class of amateur license is now no Morse test at all.<sup>7</sup>

6. Since the Commission is no longer obligated by the Radio Regulations to maintain such a requirement in its rules and the Commission has already determined that such a license qualification rule is not in furtherance of the purpose of the amateur service and no longer continues to serve a regulatory purpose, I respectfully submit that it logically follows that the Commission should expeditiously eliminate the requirement from its rules.

7. By doing so, an unnecessary burden on applicants for amateur radio licenses, the Volunteer Examiners and Volunteer Examiner Coordinators, and the Commission itself, which the Commission has already determined “... *does not comport with the basis and purpose of the Amateur Radio Service* ...” and “... *serves no regulatory purpose* ...” would be removed, no additional requirement would be imposed, and therefore no party or person would be prejudiced by such Commission action.

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<sup>7</sup> The relevant section of the ITU Radio Regulations now in force (as of July 5, 2003) reads: “*Administrations shall determine whether or not a person seeking a licence to operate an amateur station shall demonstrate the ability to send and receive texts in Morse code signals.*”

**ALL OF THE ARGUMENTS PRESENTED BY COMMENTERS IN FAVOR OF MORSE  
PROFICIENCY TESTS AS A CONDITION OF LICENSURE HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY  
CONSIDERED AND REJECTED BY THE COMMISSION**

8. Some commenters in the instant Proceedings have expressed a desire that the Commission maintain the current Morse proficiency test requirements in its Part 97 rules.
9. Some have even suggested that the Commission re-institute higher speed Morse proficiency requirements for the Amateur Extra Class license class – an idea that the Commission rejected in response to a number of Petitions for Reconsideration of the R&O.<sup>8</sup>
10. However, *there have been no new arguments* – let alone even a *single* compelling argument – presented in favor of either of these courses of action by any of the commenters in the instant Proceedings. All of the arguments in favor of maintaining, or increasing, Morse proficiency requirements presented in the instant Proceedings have been previously considered – *and rejected* – by the Commission in the R&O and in response to Petitions for Reconsideration thereof.
11. Since no new arguments or facts have been presented in favor of maintaining Morse proficiency requirements in the Commission’s Part 97 rules – *let alone increasing them* – such arguments presented by commenters in the instant Proceedings represent nothing more than an attempt at further reconsideration of the Commission’s previous rulings.
12. The time for reconsideration is long past – *by several years, in fact* – and the Commission should therefore observe the bar on late reconsideration and reject the reiteration of these previously rejected arguments, both on that legal basis and for the same fundamental reasons for which it originally rejected them in both the R&O and the reconsideration thereof.

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<sup>8</sup> See generally the Memorandum Opinion and Order, FCC 01-108, adopted March 27, 2001 and released April 6, 2001.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

13. The body of comment in these Proceedings, *and the Commission's own considered determinations from both PR Docket No. 90-55 and WT Docket No. 98-143* support the inevitable conclusion that *the public interest would best be served by the total elimination of Morse proficiency requirements for all classes of amateur license issued by the Commission.*

14. The only barrier to such action by the Commission (the previous unwaivable requirement in the Radio Regulations) was eliminated by WRC-03, effective July 5, 2003.

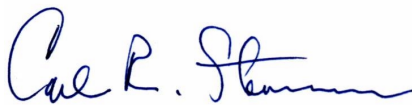
15. Even the IARU, which represents the global amateur radio community, has determined and resolved that the elimination of Morse proficiency requirements is in the best interest of the Amateur Radio Service.

16. This issue has been debated *ad nauseam* within the amateur community for at least two decades and has been one of the most divisive issues in recent memory.

17. The Commission would do the Amateur Radio Service, the amateur community, and the Commission itself a great disservice by following a lengthy NPRM/comment/reply comment cycle, likely to take approximately two years, consume untold man-hours of the Commission's limited resources, and prolong any remaining debate and contention in the amateur community.

18. I therefore respectfully request that the Commission have the courage and exercise the good judgment to both conserve its limited resources and spare the amateur community another couple of years of internal contention by granting NCI's request by an expedited order.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carl R. Stevenson".

Carl R. Stevenson – WK3C  
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